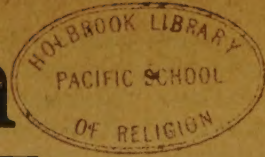


The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
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DEAR MEMBER,

Dr. Oldham has asked me to write this week's News-Letter, and it is a great pleasure to help him to a bit of a holiday. We agreed that I should write chiefly about America, for I spent most of March and April there. At the same time I want to express, if I can, not merely a view of the American scene, but some of the things which a visit to America suggests to one's mind about our own country.

AMERICAN OPINION AND THE WAR

It was almost exactly two years since my last visit to the United States, and the difference in the public temper and the whole setting of national life and thought was immense. Early in 1940 the country, broadly speaking, was opposed utterly to the Nazi way of life; almost as unanimously it desired, and was resolved, to keep out of "Europe's War." At that time it took considerable courage for a man to express publicly the view that the United States could not expect to keep out of the war without betraying its own interests and those of the freedom-loving world, and in Christian circles "interventionism" was highly unpopular. Even as late as the autumn of 1941 it is very doubtful indeed whether the President, had he thought it right to do so, could have carried the people and the Congress farther than the position generally taken at that time.

The attack by the Japanese on December 7th at Pearl Harbour, followed by declaration of war on the United States by Germany and Italy, came as a terrific shock to the mass of the people. It was not merely the treachery of attack while envoys were still parleying at Washington, though that made a deep impression; it was fundamentally the shock experienced by a people who had deeply desired peace, had believed that it could be maintained, and organized their whole life on the basis of world peace, but now found themselves forced into war. The incredible was true, and it became necessary to readjust life, rapidly and decisively, to this new situation.

Division of opinion still exists, and to some extent the old attitudes are reproduced with suitable changes. Those who were formerly "isolationists" now in many cases accept and propagate the opinion that it is only the Pacific war that matters, or that it is all really the President's fault. A disturbing thing to the foreign visitor is the strength of feeling against the President among so many of those who used to be described in England as "having a stake in the country," though it appears that many such are now prepared to distinguish between his foreign policy which they approve and his domestic policy which they reprehend. But it seems true to say that, as one friend remarked to me, "you could hear the country click into unity overnight."

One gets the impression that in proportion to the very widespread if somewhat vague pacifist feeling which was dominant in many Christian circles before, the amount of convinced and resistant pacifism is small. I was told that the number of men in conscientious camps doing civilian work was approximately 2,500; the number of those who had refused to register at all, and had consequently been imprisoned, was approximately 150 (those who refused to register did so because there was no provision in the Act for unconditional exemption). In proportion to the numbers involved—a possible army of ten millions—these are surprisingly small figures. This confirmed in me the impression that the greater

part of pacifist feeling in the United States is a profound aversion from war and a feeling that the country stands for a different way of life and ought to stick to it at all costs, rather than a "theological" pacifism. It appears at the same time that practically all the most resistant pacifism is Christian.

Organized Christian opinion is vigilant in defence of right standards in public life and of such fundamental liberties as ought to be guarded even in war. One matter which has caused much heart-searching among Christians in the United States is the treatment of the Japanese, both Japanese subjects and American citizens of Japanese blood, on the Pacific coast. Sixty thousand American citizens (*Nisei*, or American-born Japanese) have been informed that they must move from their homes and their work or be forcibly ejected by Government. It is, of course, done in order to avoid sabotage, and we who remember the widespread internment of German and Austrian refugees at Whitsuntide, 1940, can well understand both the reasons which led to the decision and the heart-searching which it has caused. It is even urged in important Christian circles that at least in the case of the American citizens the action of Government is in the spirit of the Nuremberg decrees, that is, on the view that it is race and race only that counts. I doubt whether many would go so far, but the anxiety is widely felt.

CO-OPERATION IN A POST-WAR WORLD ORDER

What is this America thinking about the future of world order? The first thing to be said is that there is wide interest in Church circles in the search for "the basis of a just and durable peace." I had the privilege of taking part in a conference on this subject held at Delaware, Ohio, which among other resolutions declared that "as Christian citizens they must seek to create a public opinion which will ensure that the United States shall play its full part in the creation of a moral way of international living.

There are, I think, two main attitudes among those who ponder over these problems. There are those who look to see such international instruments created in the political and economic spheres as shall make possible at least the beginnings of "world government" and who dislike any proposal for combined action of the United States and other nations short of that. There are others (and on the whole I found this outlook more common among those closest to the making of public policy) who see in co-operation with the British Commonwealth *imprimis* and with the United Nations as a whole, the way by which a more fully international order may be approached.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this discussion and of the ultimate decision which the American people will make. The truth is dawning on the Americans that their national power is immense and cannot remain unused; if there should be a return to "isolation" the power is still being used, but for the purposes of world confusion, not world order. For ourselves—and we are most vitally concerned—the main requirement is that we should consciously relate our policy to the achievement of an international order. I believe with intense conviction that upon collaboration between the United States and the British Commonwealth nearly everything in a secular sense depends, but I believe that chiefly because it seems to me far the most hopeful beginning of world order and the plainly indicated path to it. It is in that context alone that Americans, who combine much and deep respect for British character with a considerable dislike for the British Empire, can come to accept cordially the necessity for particular collaboration with us.

I do not think it unfair to say that American opinion is less developed than ours on the Russian question. There is the same admiration for Russian tenacity, courage and sacrifice, but not that element of personal gratitude that is felt by a people from which the horror of nightly bombing has been removed for a time by Russian endurance. There is much and deep questioning about Russian policy—political, economic and religious. Among those who see most deeply into international affairs the importance of Russia is fully manifest, whether in regard to Europe and the future of Germany or in regard to

the Far East. Given intimate understanding between them, the United States and the British Commonwealth may be able to draw Russia into a common understanding on which could be based a stable order. Without it that may be impossible.

Most Americans seem to me to recognize that in the case of Germany there must necessarily be a period between the ending of the fighting and the making of peace. The place that vigorous international action in the economic sphere must take, and the importance of the present close economic connection between the united nations, are both well and increasingly understood. I gained the impression that American thinking (and this is true in Church circles) is perhaps more defined in regard to Far Eastern matters than in regard to Europe. American concern with the Far East is deep and sincere; there are many links with China, not least the fact that the majority of educated Chinese owe their education to American institutions, either in China or in the United States. America will wish in every way to help China to be, what in the long run she must be, the main pillar of order in the Far East.

I believe that the deep and increasing interest in the ecumenical movement found everywhere in the American Churches may prove to be a matter of quite vital moment for the future. Not only is America bearing her full and great share of the financial burden of the World Council of Churches, of the support of the "orphaned" Continental Missions, of the Prisoners of War work of the Y.M.C.A., and many other good causes, but one has the feeling that an understanding of the ecumenical character of the Church grows steadily deeper. In a realization of the ecumenical Church in worship, I believe the Americans are leading us all.

AMERICA AND BRITAIN

Let me now raise the question of the bearing of all these things upon us in Great Britain. I have already suggested that there is in America both a deep admiration for British character and a considerable dislike of the British Empire. There are many superficial sources of irritation between us, about equally distributed on both sides; but I am inclined to think that there are more Americans who understand the superficial causes of irritation of which British people are conscious in them than there are British who understand the causes of irritation for which they are responsible. It is probably true that a certain insularity in the English outlook is not unconnected with that firmness and stability in the English character which Americans fully appreciate. All the same, it is a matter of really immense importance that we should learn to take America seriously, by which I mean that we should finally abandon the idea that while America is a big country, with a great deal of money and resources, it is really less interesting than the older Continental countries with their ancient and intricate cultures. The fact is that America is one of the great experimental areas of the world, in which in many departments of life new lines are being struck out and new ventures tried. American education, especially the work done in the best of the negro schools and colleges, has already conferred immense benefits upon missionary education all over the world. The best work being done in the sphere of inter-racial relationships, both in the Southern States and on the Pacific Coast, merits the attention of all serious students. There is among us far too little knowledge of American theological work, to mention only one sphere of learning, and I doubt whether it is at all widely known that Princeton probably rivals Cambridge as a centre of mathematical study for the world. I urge this needed change on our point of view not only because we owe more than we can easily tell to American support at the present time (lend-lease amounts now to a monthly total of \$400 millions), but also because this great people, which knows its own faults and is vocal in criticism of them, has so much from which we can and must learn.

It follows from this that we should not be irritated, but should listen with serious attention, when Americans criticize us on India or perhaps, airily as it seems to us, dispose of colonial questions and suggest the inter-nationalization of all colonial possessions. The

Cripps Mission was front page news all over America, and at least it has achieved this, that all thoughtful Americans now know what a complex and stubborn problem confronts not only the British in India, but Indians themselves. What we on our side must remember is that Americans will never be satisfied merely by an exposition of the intricacies of the problem. They deeply believe that freedom is the birthright of all peoples. We believe the same thing. We understand also, and the events of the last few years have driven home the lesson, that mere independence may not be the pathway to freedom. Nevertheless, we shall do well to remember the danger that an emphasis upon technical difficulties may obscure for us that simple appreciation of the goodness that there is in freedom. Similarly, with the colonial empire; Americans, and particularly missionaries, who know British colonial policy at first hand, nearly always have much admiration for it. One gets the impression that very few people in America have detailed knowledge of this subject, and it is important that there should be a greater joining of minds between America and Britain in regard to the government of the more backward peoples. Just as I believe the right way to present Anglo-American co-operation is in the context of wider international order, so it would seem to me that the plea to be made for our British colonial system (as for the Dutch) is that it has preserved order and conferred wide human benefits on backward peoples, and that it must be carried forward into whatever more stable international order may be devised for the future.

The point at which very much American Christian opinion looks with deep respect to Britain is our concern with the Christian social ethic. The Malvern Conference attracted probably even more attention in the United States than it did in England. The memorandum on Social Justice and Economic Reconstruction recently published by the Commission of the Churches has received widespread attention. It is sometimes a little surprising that representatives of the most highly capitalistic country in the world should show such enthusiasm for every sign of British Christianity "moving left." There is, however, acute awareness in informed Christian circles in the United States that America has her own intense difficulties ahead of her, and many of them believe that it may be the British who first and most satisfactorily will work out a synthesis of the individual profit motive and the demand for social security such as may be compatible with the demands of the Christian ethic.

If I seem to end on what appears to be a note of national self-gratulation I do not mean it in that way. I was moved by a remark made to me in Toronto by a great Canadian, Sir Robert Falconer, that "it would be the quality of moral character in the British people on which everything would depend." A brief stay in America does not diminish one's sense of the profound changes through which the whole imperial system will pass. It does, however, give one a clearer notion of those elements in British life, chiefly moral and spiritual, to which North America looks. The closest link which joins the British Commonwealth and the United States is the friendship and understanding provided by the Churches and the myriad of enterprises in which across the ocean they are joined.

Yours sincerely,

William Paton

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